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ABSTRACT

This digest reviews three CD-ROM (compact disc-read only memory) versions of the ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) database currently being delivered or tested and provides information for comparison. However, no attempt is made to recommend any one product. The advantages and disadvantages of the acquisition of CD-ROM databases are discussed, and the vendor address as well as a description of the database scope and information on software capabilities, hardware requirements, and any notable features are provided for the following products: (1) DIALOG OnDisc ERIC, produced by DIALOG Information Services, Inc.; (2) OCLC Search CD450 for Education, produced by the Online Computer Library Center; and (3) SilverPlatter ERIC, produced by SilverPlatter Information, Inc. In addition, a table presents a comparison of the current disc contents, archival disc contents, hardware, CD drives, and prices of the three products. (KM)

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ERIC DIGEST

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NEW ACCESS POINTS TO ERIC - CD-ROM VERSIONS

Since SilverPlatter began delivering its ERIC database product on CD-ROM in August 1986, there have been many new developments in access to ERIC on CD-ROM. This digest will review three products and present information for comparison. No attempt will be made to recommend any one product. System features and capabilities vary, and individual user needs must be taken into consideration when evaluating for purchase.

The mass storage capabilities of compact disc-read only memory (CD-ROM) will enable libraries and information centers to offer in-house access to large databases formerly available only in print or online. Each CD-ROM disc holds approximately 550 megabytes of data, the equivalent of about 220,000 printed pages or over 1,500 floppy disks. The entire ERIC database of more than 600,000 citations, with its 20 years of print indexes, fits on three CD-ROM discs.

ADVANTAGES OF CD-ROM USE

Online services can be costly and those costs are not easily estimated. In budget-based institutions such as libraries, approximate costs are difficult to manage. An obvious advantage in the acquisition of CD-ROM databases is the ability for institutions to more accurately predict the costs of offering access to databases, previously estimated in the online environment. Another is, that, given the nature of the CD-ROM retrieval software, end-user searching can be provided and promoted. The more the CD-ROM is searched, the lower the cost per search. This activity is useful in establishing information literacy as well as computer literacy.

DISADVANTAGES

The most often cited disadvantage to CD-ROM use is the fact that, at this time, each work station must have its own CD-ROM drive and only one user can have access at a time. This issue is more complicated than it appears on the surface, however. A book may only be used by one person at a time, but, in the case of a periodical index, there are ordinarily several volumes available for use. If you feel that your institution would require more than one workstation, an additional microcomputer, CD-ROM drive, and database disc(s) must be provided.

The other frequently cited disadvantage has to do with the frequency of update. The ERIC CD-ROM systems currently available are updated quarterly. Near the end of an update period, one would be missing the most recent 3 months of information. Depending on the urgency of the information need, this might necessitate the supplementing of the CD-ROM search with an online search.

ERIC CD-ROM SYSTEMS

Three vendors are currently delivering or testing CD-ROM versions of the ERIC database. Descriptive information for each of these products is presented here, followed by a comparison chart. Prices are subject to change, but are provided for reference.

DIALOG OnDisc ERIC

DIALOG Information Services, Inc.
3460 Hillview Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94304
800-3-DIALOG
415-858-3785

The Database

The database for OnDisc ERIC integrates both ERIC print indexes, Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE) and Resources in Education (RIE), in two forms. The current file contains records from 1981 to the present on one disc and the complete file contains the entire database from 1966 to the present on three discs. The archival material is not available separately.

The Software

The DIALOG OnDisc Manager search software has two modes of use, DIALOG command language for those already familiar with the DIALOG system, and easy menu mode for novice users. The command mode makes use of the standard search protocols used in the online system, while the menu mode walks users through a series of well-designed steps from selecting the type of search desired (author, subject, thesaurus terms, text words, publication type, etc.) to printing or downloading the resulting records.

The DIALOG OnDisc Manager also allows for online searching of DIALOG databases through the DIALOGLINK communications package. An OnDisc search may be automatically updated in the most current portion of online ERIC, or another DIALOG database may be searched through a DIALOG password.

OERI Office of Educational Research and Improvement U.S. Department of Education

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The Hardware

The following hardware is required to run DIALOG OnDisc ERIC:

- IBM PC or compatible microcomputer;
- IBM PC DOS 2.0 or higher;
- 384K RAM (minimum required, 640K recommended;)
- Hard storage disk with at least one megabyte of free space;
- Philips CM 100 or Hitachi CDR-1502S CD-ROM reader with controller card;
- Hayes-compatible modem to make use of DIALOGLINK communications software.

DIALOG has arranged with several vendors to provide for the lease and/or purchase of any of the hardware needed to run DIALOG OnDisc.

Notable Features

For search strategy assistance in the Easy Menu mode, the Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors is available for searching through OnDisc. One can browse through the related term displays and directly select applicable thesaurus terms for a complete search strategy.

Retrieved records can be sorted by author, title, publication year, journal name, or corporate source in the Easy Menu mode. Records may also be transferred to disk for further manipulation with a word processing program.

Finally, the inclusion of DIALOGLINK provides users with the ability to transfer to the online system to execute a DIALOG OnDisc search in the portion of the database not included on the CD-ROM, which enables users to cover the entire database efficiently.

OCLC Search CD450 for Education

Online Computer Library Center
6565 Frantz Road
Dublin, OH 43017-0702
614-764-6000

The Database

The Search CD450 education package includes three databases on five separate discs. The current database, from 1982-present includes RIE and CIJE in two separate files on one disc. Remaining discs include CIJE, 1969-1981, RIE, 1977-1981, RIE, 1967-1976 and Education Materials in Libraries, a subset of the OCLC Online Union Catalog containing education-related bibliographic records.

The current ERIC disc is available by quarterly or annual subscription. The archival discs are available as one-time purchases, and the Education Materials in Libraries is updated annually.

The Software

The Search CD450 software makes use of windows to separate the various search functions. All searches are entered into the query window. Searches may be modified by the use of fields, which are available for viewing through the use of a function key.

Single words are not searched as parts of multi-word descriptors in a basic search. The basic index may be browsed and search terms may be copied into the query window using the tab key. Thesaurus terms must be searched separately from other text words.

All records retrieved are sorted before being displayed on the screen according to the number of times the search term appears in the record, a relevance measure. The record in which the term appears most often will display first automatically. This is the only sort feature available.

The System Administration Module (SAM) allows the system operator, not the end-user, to program which fields will be searched with a particular qualifier and what fields will be displayed in each record display formats, and provides for the creation of locally written help screens. SAM also allows the system operator to control for the number of records that may be printed or stored with a single command, and where the records will be saved if users choose to store rather than print search results.

The Hardware

The following hardware is required to run OCLC Search CD450:

- IBM PC XT or AT or OCLC M300 workstation;
- minimum of 512K RAM;
- 10 megabyte hard disk or hard card;
- CD-ROM reader (manufacturers not specified in print information, tested at ERIC on Hitachi CDR1502S.)

OCLC will facilitate lease/purchase arrangements for the above equipment.

Notable Features

The ability for the system operator to alter record structure and search protocols allows for customization of the program using the System Administration Module. The help screens may be tailored to the level of the user if they do not meet institutional requirements.

All help screens are accessible through a menu interface. The user must decide which type of help is required, however.

The Education Materials in Libraries database provides for the searching of a literature base which complements the documents and journal articles found in ERIC.

The sorting of records according to search term occurrence provides a predetermined relevance judgement. Users, however, are accustomed to records in author, date, or other order and may need some time to get used to this new arrangement.

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SilverPlatter ERIC

SilverPlatter Information, Inc.
37 Walnut Street
Wellesley Hills, MA 02181
617-239-0306

The Database

The current database disc for ERIC on SilverPlatter integrates both CIJE and RIE from 1981 through the current quarter in one file. A two disk retrospective set includes the years 1966-1975 and 1976-1982. Special pricing has been arranged for those ordering the archival set and a current, quarterly subscription. The current disc is also available on an annual update basis.

Other databases available through SilverPlatter are: PsycLIT (Psychological Abstracts), A-V Online (NICEM database), LISA (Library and Information Science Abstracts), AGRICOLA (National Agriculture Library), SOCIOFILE (Sociological Abstracts), Corporate and Industry Research Reports (CIRR), and OSH-ROM (Occupational Safety and Health Information). Several other databases will become available in 1987.

The Software

The SilverPlatter program runs from a floppy disk and no hard disk is required. User training is provided through an extensive series of help screens. Field searching is available, with field labels displayed as a function key command. The basic index may be displayed, with postings for individual terms listed, but terms must then be typed in for searching.

The Hardware

SilverPlatter has produced a list of tested equipment configurations on which their system will run. Basic requirements are:

- IBM PC or compatible microcomputer;
- 512K RAM;
- PC-DOS or MS-DOS version 2.0 or higher;
- CD ROM drive, (Hitachi, Philips or SONY currently supported.)

SilverPlatter will facilitate the lease or purchase of Hitachi or Philips compact disc drives.

Notable Features

SilverPlatter is the only one of the three systems described here that does not require hard disk storage. The program may be booted from hard disk, if desired.

The instructional information available to users is extensive, with function keys and on-screen menus used to provide help information.

Also, the availability of several other databases for use with this program makes it an attractive acquisition.

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COMPARISON OF CD-ROM ERIC PRODUCTS

Features	DIALOG	OCLC	SilverPlatter
Current Disc	1981-present RIE and CIJE in single file	1982-present RIE and CIJE as separate files	1981-present RIE and CIJE as single file
Archival Discs	1966-present on 3 discs, RIE and CIJE; backfile not available separately.	CIJE 1969-1981 RIE 1967-1976 RIE 1977-1981 on separate discs	RIE and CIJE 1966-1975 and 1976-1982 on 2 discs.
Hardware	IBM PC or compatible; 384K RAM required, 640K recommended; hard disk with 1MB free space; Hayes-compatible modem for use with DIALOGLINK.	IBM PC XT or AT or OCLC M300 workstation; 512K RAM, 10MB hard disk free.	IBM PC or compatible; 512K RAM.
CD Drives	Philips or Hitachi	Philips or Hitachi	Philips, Hitachi or SONY
Prices	$750-current file with quarterly update; $1450-complete file with quarterly update.	Introductory prices: $299-member; $349-nonmember for current file with quarterly updates; $1199 member; $1399-nonmember for complete file with quarterly update.	$650-current file, quarterly updates; $390-current file, annual updates; $900 archival set, 2 discs; $1,200-complete starter set with quarterly update of current file.

For further information on any of these products, contact the vendor, or this clearinghouse. It is also advisable to make contact with other organizations of similar character who are currently making use of the system you may be considering for purchase for comparative information.